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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 001290

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WARSAW PASS TO U/S ROOD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/10/2017  
TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PL](#) [EZ](#)  
SUBJECT: CZECHS RAISE "ALARM" ON U.S. MISSILE DEFENSE SITE  
IN EUROPE

REF: A. PRAGUE 999  
[B](#). PRAGUE 1160  
[C](#). PRAGUE 1174

Classified By: Ambassador Richard Graber for reasons 1.4 b+d

[1](#). (U) Action requests in para 15.

[2](#). (C/NF) Summary and comment: The Czechs are concerned about the pace of negotiations on the European MD site, as well as what they perceive as a lack of full USG commitment to the project. Ambassador has heard in the past week from Deputy PM Vondra and Deputy FM Pojar, both of whom made identical emphatic talking points. Specifically, the Czechs fear that their timeline for concluding and ratifying the MD agreements next spring (after the NATO Summit but before regional elections in the fall) could be in danger because of (a) the large number of unresolved negotiating issues, particularly in the bilateral SOFA, with special focus given to the politically sensitive environmental issues and (b) the slow pace of negotiations in Poland. To illustrate their concerns about the USG commitment to the success of the third (European) site, the Czechs point to a number of examples including their inability to secure a date for PM Topolaneck to visit the White House early next year and the lack of advance efforts to integrate a message on MD into the roll-out of the recent Iran NIE. Czech views appear to have been influenced to some extent by recent coordination with the new Polish government. The GOCR desire to see this project succeed is genuine. The Czechs are negotiating in good faith this week on both MD-related agreements, and hope that they will see sufficient progress to allay some of their concerns about timing. We believe the USG needs to do more to help the Czechs win what continues to be an uphill domestic struggle. The most important step would be to schedule a meeting for PM Topolaneck. Embassy recommendations are in para 15. End summary and comment.

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NIE complaints were largely for domestic consumption  
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[3](#). (C) Czech Deputy Foreign Minister Tomas Pojar met with Ambassador and embassy MD team on December 10. Echoing points that Deputy PM Sasha Vondra had made earlier, Pojar complained about how difficult the lack of a heads up on the Iran NIE had been for the GOCR, which had to respond cold to inquiries from the press about the impact that the report would have on MD negotiations. Ambassador said he understood Czech frustration, but urged the GOCR to refrain from further public complaints about the NIE and focus on moving the MD

project forward.

14. (C/NF) Pojar essentially dismissed the public comments that he and other senior MFA officials had made in recent days about the lack of heads up on the NIE, saying these were only for domestic consumption and necessary in light of the fact that the government had been caught off guard by the NSC announcement of the NIE on December 3. (Comment: Despite the lack of advance coordination, Czech official comments from the start were completely consistent with U.S. points, stressing the continuing threat posed by Iran's enrichment and missile programs, and thus the continued need for the MD project in the Czech Republic and Poland.)

15. (C/NF) Pojar then went on to list a series of serious concerns he and the Czech government hold about the status of the third (European) MD site. These fall into two broad baskets. First, that the Czech timeline for MD ratification may not be met. Second, that the USG is not devoting sufficient high-level focus and coordination to the third site, which has a negative impact on the Czechs, uphill struggle to win approval of MD.

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Timeline issues  
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16. (C) As discussed in reftels, the Czech domestic political realities have forced the GOCR to come up with a tight political calendar for ratification next year. They need to avoid their presidential election in February and regional elections in the fall, and also want the ratification to take place soon after the April NATO Summit in Bucharest, in order to stress the NATO linkage. This means concluding negotiations in the first quarter of 2008, since the

parliamentary process takes at a minimum 2-3 months. As discussed further below, another key timing element is an early spring White House meeting for PM Topolaneck, which will provide a much-needed boost before the ratification debate.

17. (C) Pojar told us December 10 he is increasingly worried that this timeline will not hold. He is concerned about the pace of U.S.-Czech negotiations, specifically the many open technical issues in the bilateral SOFA. In addition to the major sovereignty-related issues already identified (scope of the SOFA, symbolic rent, and criminal jurisdiction), Pojar is particular concerned about the lack of progress to date on environmental language, which is of critical importance to the Greens. Pojar is less concerned about the Bilateral Missile Defense Agreement (BMDA), except to the extent that issues in that agreement (like the environment) depend on closure in the SOFA. Pojar expects two or three more SOFA rounds may be needed. The larger the number of open issues, the harder it will be for him to win political-level agreement on compromise Czech positions. Pojar said the GOCR had considered canceling this week's negotiations following the NIE release last week, but said that the fact that they stuck with the schedule was proof of their commitment to move forward to agreement. Based on the SOFA and BMDA negotiation this week, Pojar has to report to the Czech National Security Council, which will meet on December 18 and assess the feasibility of the timeline. Next month's NSC meeting on January 17 will be the one at which Pojar seeks approval for new compromise language to conclude the agreements. (Comment: Environment will be the first topic when the two SOFA teams start negotiations on December 11. Pojar is very pleased that some elements of the U.S. SOFA negotiating team will stay over for the BMDA talks on December 14 as he sees this sort of coordination as important to accelerating talks.)

18. (C) Of greater concern to Pojar, since this is largely out of his control, is the pace of Polish negotiations. Politically the Czechs cannot ratify before the U.S.-Polish negotiations are completed: it is essential to assure MPs that the third site as a whole, including the interceptors that will protect Czech territory, is going forward. With Polish SOFA negotiations not yet launched, Pojar fears that

it will be impossible to maintain the Czech timetable.  
(Note: After meeting on the margins of a Visegrad-4 summit on December 10, the Czech and Polish PMs agreed to continue to coordinate on MD, and to meet again on this topic in January.)

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USG coordination and attention  
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¶9. (C/NF) In Pojar's view, USG actions to date have too often failed to take into account their impact on the domestic debate in the Czech Republic or Poland. This was seen in the initial U.S. roll-out of the MD project (site surveys during the 2006 parliamentary election, the formal offer to launch negotiations delivered on the day that the Topolánek government won a tough vote of confidence) and has continued since.

¶10. (C/NF) Pojar highlighted what he saw as the failure to include a coordinated message supporting the third site in the National Security Advisor's December 3 press briefing announcing the NIE findings. While that briefing highlighted the finding that the Iranian missile development program continued, it did not specifically address the need for the third site, something that would have greatly benefited the domestic debate.

¶11. (C/NF) Second, the Czech inability, after several months of waiting, to secure a date for PM Topolánek to visit the White House in late February/early March. (Pojar also referred to the delay in getting a date for PM Tusk to see the President, presumably reflecting the long meeting Pojar apparently had with new Polish FM Sikorski on the margins of last week's NATO Ministerial. Continuing on the Polish front, Pojar also complained that the USG missed an opportunity to accelerate the Polish track of negotiations by having the President or Secretary of State call their new Polish counterpart to propose a re-launch of negotiations. Finally he suggested that, while Pojar has no doubt that the new GOP wants to continue the MD negotiations, he senses enough frustration in Warsaw that it is conceivable to him that they would try to delay MD talks until after January ¶2009. Pojar said that the GOCR would not take any actions to

"kill or postpone" negotiations, but that if the Poles delayed, the Czechs would have no choice but to follow suit.)

¶12. (C/NF) Third, continued USG inability to consult and coordinate fully with the Czechs and Poles in advance of important USG negotiations (e.g., with Russia) or announcements (e.g., the NIE). The best example was the press furor that followed Secretary Gates' October comments in Prague about a possible Russian "presence" at the radar facility (ref C). While these problems have all been eventually put to rest after the fact, they take a toll. (Comment: Pojar appreciates the planned phone conversation this week with U/S Rood, in advance of his meeting on December 13 with the Russians.)

¶13. (C/NF) Finally, Pojar (joined in this assessment by Tomáš Klavánek, government coordinator for MD outreach, who had just returned from a week in Washington) said that the Czechs continue to face difficulties in getting USG information for public release and appropriate high level USG figures to support essential Czech outreach events. Both Pojar and Klavánek noted that the Czechs have been "playing defense" from the start on the MD debate, and they need robust USG assistance to start taking the offensive and prepare to win the tough parliamentary battle. Specific examples: difficulties and delay in winning USG release needed to publish technical data related to the radar, including data that have already been in public circulation; difficulty obtaining senior USG officials for politically important Czech events, such as the planned BMD Seminar on industrial cooperation in January. Pojar concluded his participation in the meeting by noting that "if the USG were serious about the third site, you would have an MDA Liaison Officer already

based in Prague."

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Comment and action requests  
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¶14. (C/NF) Pojar -- who constantly reminds us that he is not a professional diplomat -- is a passionate supporter of the MD effort. Like many in the Topolanek government, he sees the successful conclusion of the third site as critical to the future of NATO and the future of U.S. engagement in Central Europe. By extension, he fears the failure of the effort will have a negative impact on transatlantic relations; no doubt he also worries about the impact that failure would have for the Topolanek government. Pojar's comments follow the frustration generated by the NIE report and his apparently long conversation with the Polish ForMin.

¶15. (C/NF) This is not to dismiss Pojar's concerns. We know the USG is also worried about the timeline. However, we fully support Pojar's view that the tough effort ahead to win approval of the MD agreements requires even more USG engagement. Specifically:

-- We must provide a date for PM Topolanek to meet the President in the late February/early March period. A public statement by the two heads of government, including a clear message of support and thanks from the President, is critical to the Czech parliamentary strategy. Nailing this down will go a long way towards reassuring the Czech government, which could pay off in a more forthcoming Czech negotiating position.

-- To showcase the NATO connection, the Czechs plan a major conference on NATO and MD in March. They seek a senior USG official to anchor the conference; last week Klvana requested the participation of either Secretary Rice or U/S Burns. For maximum impact it is important that we provide a senior official who has not recently been in the CR.

-- Another critical element of the Czech strategy, and a top priority for the PM, is demonstrating that Czech participation in MD will lead to new cooperation between Czech firms/research institutes and the USG/contractors. MDA is putting together a BMD Seminar in January to explore potential involvement of Czech technologies in the global BMD system; Raytheon, the likely contractor for the Czech radar site, plans in industry day in February. The GOCR wants to draw press and parliamentary attention to both of these. We are well aware of the need to keep expectations in check. But we also need to help the Czechs in their PR efforts. The GOCR plans to have either the PM or ForMin open the January seminar; they have requested the participation of senior American military officers. We need to increase the level of our planned participation at the seminar to support this

effort.  
Graber